

Green Infrastructure

- 4.9.1 This policy aims to protect, provide, enhance and expand the green infrastructure assets which contribute to the quality of life within and around Bristol. In protecting important open space it acknowledges that not all open land can be left unchanged and so sets a strategic framework for the choices to be made.
- 4.9.2 The policy will make a significant contribution to the achievement of objectives 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 of the Core Strategy and responds to issues 5, 8, 10, 11 and 12.

Context

- 4.9.3 Green infrastructure is the term used to describe the network of green assets that can work together to support sustainability and quality of life within and around Bristol. These networks bring many social, economic and environmental benefits, including:
- **Improved townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity:**
Parks and gardens, open spaces, landscapes, trees and many other elements of green infrastructure contribute to Bristol's townscape and landscape quality. By providing relief to the built form and enhancing overall visual amenity, green infrastructure makes a vital contribution to the quality of Bristol as a place to live, work, visit and invest in.
 - **Protected and enhanced biodiversity:**
Green infrastructure provides space for nature, allows community interaction with nature, provides educational opportunities and encourages presence and diversity of species. It can provide habitats that are linked throughout the city and beyond, allowing adaptation to changes in the built and natural environment.
 - **Provision of green active travel routes:**
Green infrastructure can include walking and cycle routes, public rights of way, accessible river corridors and green streets that create pleasant surroundings and links, which encourage physical activity as part of everyday life. The strategic green infrastructure network protects and enhances connections between elements of green infrastructure in the city and allows improved connectivity for people and wildlife.
 - **Improved mental and physical health of local communities:**
Green infrastructure ensures access to good quality recreational places and spaces, encourages active travel along cycle and walking routes, provides space for community activities and interaction, reduces noise and water pollution, improves air quality and also allows access to natural areas of space and wildlife.
 - **Space for local food production within the city:**
Allotments, grazing land, city farms and informal areas of green space create potential for local food production and community use. These types of green infrastructure can contribute to people's health and well being, provide education opportunities and can also be valuable for wildlife.

- **Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change:**

Provision of green infrastructure in the correct locations can reduce water run off and provide flood storage capacity. Certain types of green infrastructure also have a role in absorbing carbon dioxide, reducing the effect of 'urban heat islands' and linking species and habitat areas, allowing continued wildlife adaptation. Through providing linked accessible green infrastructure in a strategic network, a reduction in car dependency to access green infrastructure is also possible.

- 4.9.4 A number of open spaces, waterways, biological sites, wildlife network corridors and landscape features and countryside, together form the strategic green infrastructure network, which is important at a citywide scale. It serves large sections of Bristol's population providing linkages to green infrastructure across the city and connecting to the wider sub-regional network of green infrastructure. Bristol also has land within its boundary which is designated as Green Belt. This makes up an important part of the strategic green infrastructure network and is afforded protection through national policy. Diagram 4.9.1 illustrates the strategic green infrastructure network in Bristol and shows how this strategic network links with the surrounding areas.
- 4.9.5 The strategic green infrastructure network is complemented by further elements of green infrastructure, such as less strategic open space, school grounds, green roofs, local biological sites, private gardens, allotments, grazing land, city farms, cemeteries, pedestrian paths, trees and woodland, and landscaped areas. These elements of green infrastructure have an equally important role in contributing to the sustainability and quality of life within the city and are of particular benefit to local communities.

Policy BCS9

The integrity and connectivity of the strategic green infrastructure network will be maintained, protected and enhanced. Opportunities to extend the coverage and connectivity of the existing strategic green infrastructure network should be taken.

Individual green assets should be retained wherever possible and integrated into new development. Loss of green infrastructure will only be acceptable where it is allowed for as part of an adopted Development Plan Document or is necessary, on balance, to achieve the policy aims of the Core Strategy. Appropriate mitigation of the lost green infrastructure assets will be required.

Development should incorporate new and/or enhanced green infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size. Where on-site provision of green infrastructure is not possible, contributions will be sought to make appropriate provision for green infrastructure off site.

Open Space

Open spaces which are important for recreation, leisure and community use, townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity will be protected.

Some areas of open space may be released, through the development plan process, for appropriate development where:

- They are no longer important for recreation, leisure and community use, townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity;
- Development of all or part of an open space would result in improved urban form or an enhancement to existing open space areas.

New development should incorporate, or contribute towards, the provision of an appropriate level and quality of open space.

Biological and Geological Conservation

Internationally important nature conservation sites are subject to statutory protection.

National and local sites of biological and geological conservation importance will be protected having regard to the hierarchy of designations and the potential for appropriate mitigation. The extent to which a development would contribute to the achievement of wider objectives of the Core Strategy will be carefully considered when assessing their impact on biological and geological conservation.

Where development would have an impact on the Bristol Wildlife Network it should ensure that the integrity of the network is maintained or strengthened.

Explanation

- 4.9.6 Green infrastructure assets include open spaces, recreation areas, parks and gardens, allotments, biological and geological conservation sites, landscape features, rivers, waterways and watercourses, woodlands, street trees and planting, green roofs and walls, cycle routes, pedestrian walkways and public rights of way, green corridors and open countryside. This policy addresses green infrastructure assets as a whole and also sets out the approach to two specific forms of green asset, open space and biological and geological conservation sites.
- 4.9.7 Diagram 4.9.1 illustrates the strategic green infrastructure network in Bristol and shows how this strategic network links with the surrounding areas. The diagram is indicative and broadly shows the strategic network. It is not intended that the diagram is a precise guide or that it formally designates land to be kept free from development. However, it does give a broad indication of the strategic green areas and links which are important at a city scale and in that respect can be used as a guide to decision making.

Loss of open space

4.9.8 Whilst the Core Strategy aims to retain the vast majority of green open space within the city, not all such land is important for recreation, leisure and community use, townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity. Existing open spaces may also offer opportunities to contribute to the delivery of necessary development, improvements to urban form or enhancements to existing open space areas. In determining whether open space should be released community involvement will be central to decision making. Account will also be taken of open space standards, levels of provision in the locality and the importance of the open space for recreation, leisure and community use, its contribution to townscape and landscape quality and its visual amenity.

Biological and Geological Conservation

4.9.9 As explained in PPS9 “Biodiversity and Geological Conservation” the level of protection afforded to biological and geological conservation sites is dependent on whether they are of international, national or local importance, those of international and national importance being afforded more protection than those of local importance. In Bristol, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest are designated through the Development Plan process as local sites. These are accompanied by Local Nature Reserves and Regionally Important Geological Sites which are local sites designated through separate processes. Land with a function as a corridor for wildlife, along with the locally designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, form the Bristol Wildlife Network. The Network either links the designated local sites to each other or to the wider countryside.

Policy Delivery

The impact of new development on green infrastructure assets will be assessed as part of the development management process. Development management will also secure the retention of green assets in development proposals and the incorporation of new green infrastructure assets.

The Site Allocations & Development Management DPD will include supporting policies setting out the detailed approach to green infrastructure assets. This will include standards to determine the appropriate provision of open space and other green infrastructure assets.

A supplementary planning document will be prepared to provide further guidance on the implementation of green infrastructure policies in the Bristol Development Framework. It will provide information on approaches to mitigation and to the inclusion of green infrastructure in development. It will also include a typology for green infrastructure.

Strategic Green Infrastructure Network

Joint working with adjacent local authorities, Natural England and other partners will be undertaken to enhance strategic green infrastructure links between Bristol and the surrounding areas.

Green infrastructure and development on open space

The Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and Bristol Central Area Action Plan will designate important open spaces and Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.

Where it is proposed to develop publicly accessible open space recognised by the council's Parks and Green Space Strategy, these will be identified in Area Green Space Plans being prepared by the council in consultation with local communities. The Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and Bristol Central Area Action Plan will designate these sites for development where they are of sufficient size to be shown on the Proposals Map.

The Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and Bristol Central Area Action Plan will also identify other green space areas for potential development where they are not important for recreation, leisure and community use, townscape and landscape quality and visual amenity and are required to meet identified development needs or improve the urban form. These DPDs will be the subject of extensive community involvement.

Area Green Space Plans will identify priorities for open space improvements across Bristol based on consultation with local communities. Improvements will primarily be undertaken by Bristol City Council.

The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy sets out the appropriate standards for open space provision. Other strategies produced by the council will set out standards and approaches to other forms of green infrastructure. These standards will be embodied in the Site Allocations & Development Management DPD.

BCS21 and its associated development policies in the Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and Bristol Central Area Action Plan provide the framework for indicating how development should respond to the city's landscape structure and topography.

Nature Conservation

The Site Allocations & Development Management DPD and Bristol Central Area Action Plan will designate local Sites of Nature Conservation Interest. The Proposals Map will also show international, national and local biological and geological conservation sites designated outside the development plan process.

At the time of the adoption of the Site Allocations & Development Management DPD the Bristol Wildlife Network will be identified on publicly available maps accompanied by corridor profiles. Together they will be used to guide consideration of impacts on the Wildlife Network (Local Plan Policy NE6 will continued to be saved until adoption of the DPD).

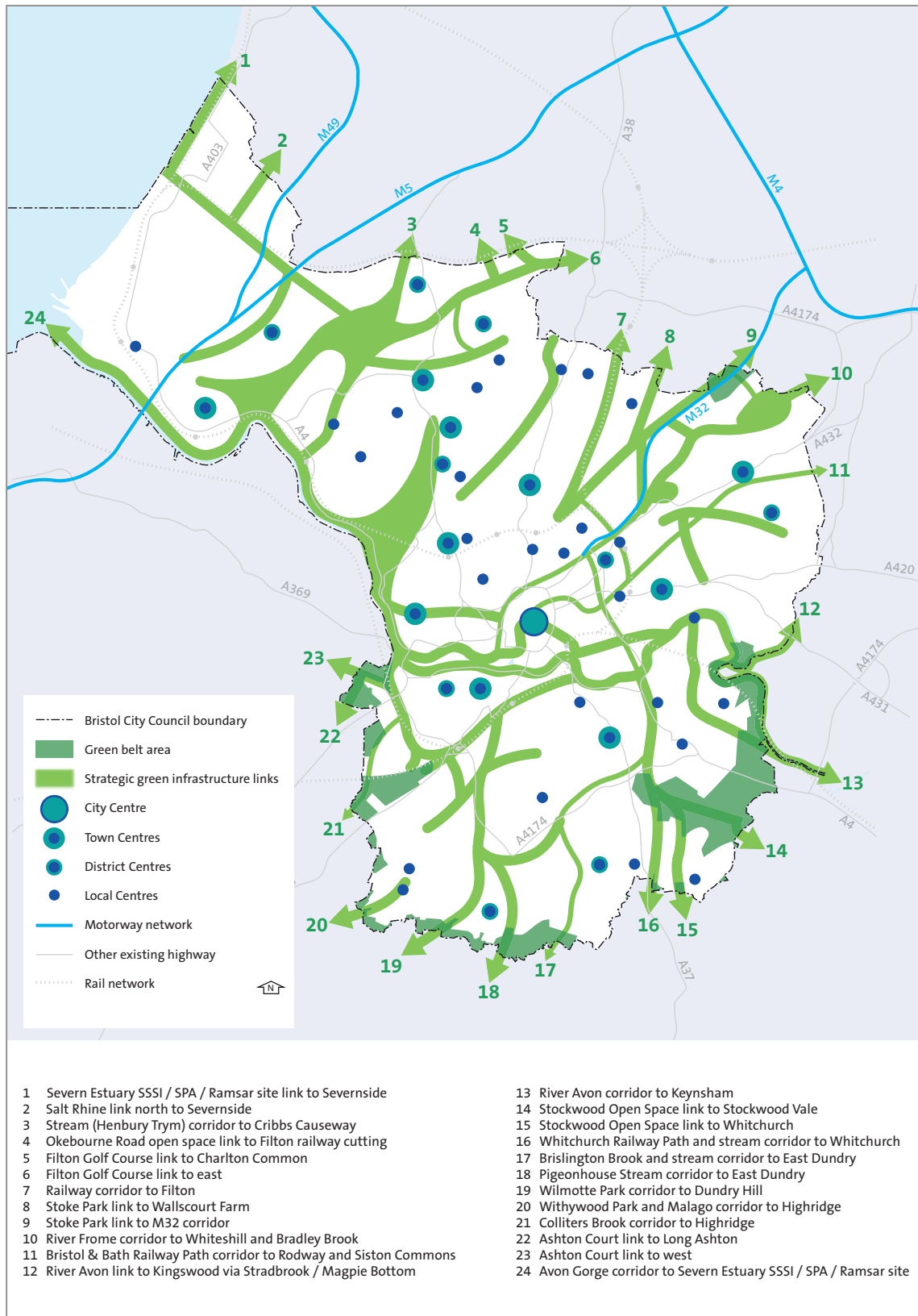
The Bristol Biodiversity Action Plan will be used to guide decisions on protection, enhancement and provision of additional green infrastructure relating to biological and geological conservation. Where relevant the Avon Biodiversity Action Plan, and Strategic Nature Areas identified at the regional level, will also guide these decisions.

Policy BCS23 refers to monitoring the impacts of airborne pollution on the Avon Gorge Woodlands Special Area of Conservation.

Targets	Indicators
Enhance the quality of publicly accessible open spaces in the city	Amount and % of eligible open spaces managed to Green Flag Award standard (Core Output Indicator NCOI 4c)
Retain areas of biodiversity importance	Change in areas of biodiversity importance (Core Output Indicator E2 (NCOI 8))
Improve management of local biodiversity sites	Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites (National Indicator 157)
Increase tree cover	% of tree cover
	Number of let allotments in the city



Diagram 4.9.1: Strategic Green Infrastructure Network



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